DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 035 521 RE 002 356

AUTHOR Berger, Allen
TITLE A Comparative Study of Reading Improvement Programs in Industry and Education in the United States and Canada.
PUB DATE 1 Nov 69
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at the North Central Reading Association conference, Flint, Mich., Oct. 31-Nov. 1, 1969

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.70
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Reading Programs, *College Language Programs, Foreign Countries, *Industrial Education, *National Surveys, Reading Centers, Reading Comprehension, Reading Improvement, Reading Speed

ABSTRACT

A survey was made of the reading programs which exist in commercial reading firms, college and university reading centers, and corporations in the United States and Canada. The resulting data, recorded here, are presented so that one may become familiar with the current status of reading improvement programs in both countries. Fifteen tables contain the essence of the questionnaire results. Among the questions asked were Do these courses have any philosophy? How large are the classes? and Is vision checked? The survey revealed that both countries lack adult reading improvement courses which are offered by colleges and universities. This lack of service may contribute to the separation between universities and the cities in which they exist. Tables and references are included. (NH)

ED035521

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF READING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS IN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Allen Berger

The University of Alberta

In preparation for an address entitled "Speed Reading: Is the Present Emphasis Desirable?" at the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the International Reading Association in Boston in April, 1968, a questionnaire was composed to determine the existing situation regarding programs designed to increase reading rate. In the United States, the questionnaire was mailed to 225 commercial reading firms, whose addresses were obtained from the yellow pages of telephone directories of different parts of the U.S.; 372 college and

---

Dr. Allen Berger is Associate Professor at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. The first part of this study was done while he was at The Reading Center, Southern Illinois University.

Appreciation is extended to Drs. Margaret Keyser Hill, H. Alan Robinson, and Nila Banton Smith for their suggestions in regard to the questionnaire used in this study; to Dr. Marion D. Jenkinson for comments after reading the original manuscript; and to Mrs. Kathleen Nelson, Miss Linda Williamson, and Mrs. Sharon Dickson, for their help with the data.

RE002 356

university reading centers, as listed in the Lambuth College Directory (3); and 500 top corporations, as listed in Fortune (4).

The same questionnaire was mailed the following year in Canada to 25 commercial reading firms, 70 colleges and universities,* and 150 top corporations.

Of the 1,088 questionnaires mailed in January, 1968, in the United States, 292, or 27 per cent, responses were received; these included completed or partially completed questionnaires and letters from 45 states and the District of Columbia. Responses came from 53, or 11 per cent of the corporations[1]; 48, or 21 per cent of the commercial reading firms; and 191, or 53 per cent of the college and university reading centers.

Of the 245 questionnaires mailed in April, 1969, in Canada, 83, or 33.9 per cent, responses were received. The breakdown was 39, or 26 per cent of the corporations replied; 8, or 32 per cent of the commercial reading firms; and 36, or 51.4 per cent of the colleges and universities.

Because only a small portion of the data has been presented (1), the purpose of this paper is to record the data obtained from the questionnaire survey so that one may become familiar with the current status of reading improvement programs in the United States and Canada.

The following questions and tables contain the essence of the questionnaire results.

---

*Questionnaires were sent to colleges and Universities in Canada because there are relatively few Reading Centers in Canada in contrast to the large number in the United States.

[1]Respondents from many corporations noted that they refer employees to commercial reading firms, or to colleges and universities, instead of staffing a reading program.

Do These Courses Have Any Philosophy?

Various statements concerning philosophy of reading were included with returned questionnaires. Many of these statements were somewhat general (e.g., "reaching potential of students," etc.). Nevertheless, of the 203 U.S. responses and 36 Canadian responses to the statement, "we have a basic philosophy," respectively, 180, or 89 per cent, and 26, or 72.2 per cent, replied affirmatively. Table 1 indicates that commercial reading firms and colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada tend to have philosophies.

Insert Table 1 Here

How is "Speed Reading" Defined?

The questionnaire contained the following statement to be completed: "A definition of speed reading that most clearly fits the objectives of our program is:". A multiplicity of responses were received, as indicated in Table 2. (The first five responses were listed on the questionnaire; the others were written in by the respondents.) As indicated, corporations, firms, and universities in U.S. and Canada prefer "efficiency of reading."

Insert Table 2 Here

Who Takes the Reading Improvement Courses?

In U.S., the corporations tend to have a greater percentage of college educated adults, whereas in Canada they tend to have a greater percentage of high school graduates. Regarding the commercial reading firms, college

educated adults are the largest "market" in both countries.

Of particular interest here is that a greater percentage of Canadian college students than U.S. college students take commercial reading courses; this pattern is also true among businessmen and professional people. One interpretation is that few Canadian colleges and universities have reading improvement programs. This interpretation is substantiated by the data indicating that in neither country do colleges and universities seem to service the reading needs of the general public including professional and businessmen.

Insert Table 3 Here

How Large Are the Classes?

Table 4 reveals the range and median class size of reading improvement programs in U.S. and Canada.

Insert Table 4 Here

What is the Total Number of Hours Spent in Classroom Instruction During the Whole Course?

The corporations in U.S. and Canada tend to have a similar median number of total classroom hours of instruction. The commercial reading firms in U.S., however, have more total median hours of instruction than do those in Canada, and the colleges and universities in U.S. have considerably more total median hours of instruction than do those in Canada.

Insert Table 5 Here

What Kinds of Materials and Equipment are Used?

A wide array of materials is used; respondents mentioned records, tapes, films, filmstrips, transparencies, overhead projectors, reading kits, accelerators, tests, tachistoscopes, workbooks, charts, maps, games, books, multi-sensory materials, manuals, and experience reports.

Machines are widely used. Some respondents, however, specified restrictions for such use; e.g., "during first three weeks," or "first twenty minutes of class time."

Table 6 indicates that the tachistoscope is the favorite for group instruction in U.S. and Canadian corporations, whereas, for individuals, controlled pacers are favored. Commercial reading firms and colleges and universities have a similar pattern as the corporations, with commercial firms making increased use of textbooks.

Insert Table 6 Here

Who Teaches the Course?

Table 7 reveals that 21 Ph.D. degree holders are actively involved in teaching these courses in the U.S. (mostly in universities), [redacted]

Insert Table 7 Here

Is Vision Checked?

Routine vision checks are reported in 94 programs in U.S., and six noted that vision is checked when requested by student, parent or teacher. Five commercial firms in U.S. recommend a private eye examination for all

students; one requires proof of a recent examination.

Approximately twice the percentage of U.S. commercial reading firms and colleges and universities have vision checks in comparison to the percentages in Canada.

Insert Table 8 Here

What Kinds of Instruments are Used to Check Vision?

Table 9 indicates that the Keystone Telebinocular is the most popular instrument used to check vision in reading improvement courses.

Insert Table 9 Here

Is There Any Pre-Testing of Reading Skills?

Pre-testing is reported by the majority of those responding in U.S. and Canada. Over 90 different ways were mentioned. Tests indicated as most popular were The Nelson-Denny Reading Test, the Cooperative English Tests, EDL Reading Versatility Tests, and various forms of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, Science Research Associates (SRA) Tests, Gates Reading Survey, and teacher-made tests, including informal reading inventories.

Table 10 indicates that more than 90 per cent of the commercial reading firms and colleges and universities in U.S. and Canada give pre-tests. Regarding corporations, 73.8% in U.S. and 100% in Canada have pre-tests in their programs.

Insert Table 10 Here

What is Done in the Last Session?

There appears to be a greater variety of things occurring at the last session of reading improvement courses in corporations, commercial firms, and colleges and universities in U.S. Table 11 contains these data.

Insert Table 11 Here

What Are the Rate Goals?

Respondents were asked to complete the following statement: "The reading rate that we have as a goal for our students is:" Specific rates mentioned ranged from a minimum of 25 wpm to a maximum of 18,000 wpm. The median of the minimum was 600; the median of the maximum, 900. Many respondents chose to qualify the above rates by specifying the types of material for which a particular speed was intended, such as 600-900 wpm for newspapers, or popular magazines; 300 wpm for textbooks. Others stated a rate and added "for skimming only." Many chose not to set a specific numerical rate; 29 respondents preferred an individualized rate. Some specified that basic reading skills must have reached an acceptable level before there could be any stress on rate. Many preferred to state the rate goal in terms of doubling or tripling the starting rate while some stated the aim was only for improvement of rate. Further qualification came from those who stressed that speed is variable and must be adjusted to individual skills, material, and purpose. In Canada, goals in corporations and colleges and universities did not exceed, respectively, 900 and 1500 wpm. The goal was 5,000 words a minute for one commercial reading firm in Canada.

Are These Gains Maintained after Student Has Left the Class?

Generally, respondents indicated that gains are maintained. They cited follow-up studies, post-testing months after course completion, or conferences with students, parents, or teachers.

Insert Table 12 Here

How Is Rate Measured?

Most respondents measured rate by "number of words per minute" while some used "number of words dealt with per minute." The Effective Rate, which is referred to as the Reading Index by the Educational Development Laboratories (EDL) and others, is also used. Other ways indicated by individual respondents included "number of pages read in a given time," "percentile on the Iowa Test," "percentile on the Cooperative Test," "time to read a given chapter," "time to read an entire book," "reduction of time spent on reading," "maintenance of comprehension at an 80 per cent level or speed is not stressed," and the use of "gross and effective rates." A few said they did not measure rate. No respondent mentioned measuring rate by number of syllables. Table 13 provides information on rate measurement.

Insert Table 13 Here

What Are the Comprehension Goals?

Respondents generally expressed concern for adequate comprehension. The majority of programs in U.S. and Canadian corporations, commercial

reading firms, and colleges and universities aim for 70 to 90 per cent comprehension.

Some respondents indicated that comprehension varies with individuals, materials, and purpose. Ways of measuring comprehension included quizzes, standardized tests, teacher-made tests, group discussions, outlines, summaries, and major ideas.

Insert Table 14 Here

Is Any Relationship Made to Study Skills?

More emphasis is placed on study skills in reading improvement programs in Canadian corporations, about the same emphasis is given in commercial reading firms in both U.S. and Canada, and more emphasis is given in U.S. colleges and universities, as indicated in Table 15.

Insert Table 15 Here

Conclusion

The findings of this survey are in line with those obtained in the survey made by Geerlofs and Kling (2). It is encouraging to observe certain practices. One is the use of the vision check. Another is the use of more formal testing procedures before and after instruction. A third practice that is encouraging relates to the cooperation extended by corporations, commercial reading firms, and college and universities in providing information about their programs for this study. Cooperation of this nature will lead to increased communication and through communication there will come a clearer understanding of the problems and the realization of their solutions.

One area of neglect revealed by this survey concerns the general public. Relatively few colleges and universities provide a reading improvement service for adults. This relative lack of service may in part reflect the current emphasis upon research and training in many institutions of higher education, contributing, perhaps, to the separation between "town and gown" in many cities.

REFERENCES

1. Berger, Allen. "Speed Reading: Is the Present Emphasis Desirable?" Current Issues in Reading. Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, pending publication.

2. Geerlofs, Marjorie White and Martin Kling. "Current Practices in College and Adult Developmental Reading Programs," Journal of Reading, Vol. 11, No. 7 (April, 1968), pp. 517-20, 569-75.

3. Helms, Walter E. A Directory of College and University Reading Clinics/ Centers in the United States, 1966-67. Jackson, Tennessee: Lambuth College, 1967.

4. Unsigned Article. "The 500 Largest U.S. Industrial Corporations," Fortune, June 15, 1967, pp. 196-213.

AB:tk

TABLE I

PHILOSOPHY OF READING

	United States				Canada			
	Number		Per Cent		Number		Per Cent	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Corporations	9	8	52.9	47.1	2	4	33.4	66.6
Commercial Reading Firms	36	2	95	5	10	1	90.9	9.1
Colleges and Universities	135	13	91	9	14	5	73.7	26.3

TABLE 2

DEFINITION OF SPEED READING

	Corporations				Commercial Reading Firms			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Increasing rate of reading	0		0		1	2.1	2	10.5
Increasing flexibility of reading	1	5.5	2	25	2	4.3	3	15.8
Increasing efficiency of reading	5	27.7	4	50	21	44.7	7	37
Increasing rate of comprehension	1	5.5	2	25	4	8.5	3	15.8
All of above	2	11.1			7	14.9	0	
* Other	9	50	0		12	25.5	4	21

*Other definitions include various combinations of the above definitions, with the colleges and universities giving particular emphasis to the idea of flexibility.

Colleges and Universities (Table 2 continued)

U. S.		Can.	
No.	%	No.	%
3	1.9	3	10
17	10.9	6	20
49	30.8	16	53.4
25	16.4	3	10
11	6.9		
54	33.9	2	6.6

TABLE 3

WHO TAKES THE READING IMPROVEMENT COURSES?

	Corporations				Commercial Reading Firms			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Elementary school children	1	2.5			5	4.3	1	2.4
High school students	1	2.5			26	22.6	7	17
High school graduates	10	25	6	42.9	18	16.3	6	14.6
College educated adults	12	30	4	28.6	25	21.1	9	21.9
College students	0				5	4.3	4	9.8
College graduates	11	27.5	4	28.6	22	19.1	7	17
All of the above	0				5	4.3	0	
Supervisors	1	2.5			0		0	
General adult public	0				3	2.6	0	
Businessmen and executives	0				4	3.5	4	9.8
Business and professional people	0				0			
Any average reader above 13 years of age	0				1	.9	3	7.3
Mentally retarded, brain damaged, and functionally illiterates	0				1	.9		
Other	5	12.5			0			

(Table 3 continued)

Colleges and Universities			
U. S.		Can.	
No.	%	No.	%
18	5.5	0	
60	18.5	4	11.4
51	15.8	4	11.4
72	22.2	12	34.3
75	23.2	7	20
41	12.6	7	20
0		0	
0		0	
5	1.5	1	2.9
0			
2	.6		
0			
0			
0			

TABLE 4

CLASS SIZE

	Range of Class Size		Median Class Size	
	U. S.	Can.	U. S.	Can.
Corporations	1 to 25 persons	1 to 25 persons	20	14
Commercial Reading Firms	1 to 30 persons	12 to 30 persons	10	24
Colleges and Universities	1 to 100 persons	10 to ,150 persons	16	26

TABLE 5

HOURS SPENT IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

	Range of Total Class Hours		Median of Total Class Hours	
	U. S	Can.	U. S.	Can.
Corporations	6 to 48	4 to 40	20	18
Commercial Reading Firms	10 to 100	2 to 30	24	19
Colleges and Universities	5 to 140	2 to 30	30	11

TABLE 6

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT USAGE

	Corporations							
	Groups				Individual			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Tachistoscope	11		2		3		0	
Controlled pacing machine	8		2		8		3	
Scanning paperbacks	3		1		6		0	
Films	7		1		1		0	
Textbooks	3		3		6		1	
Other materials and equipment (Group and Individual)	8		1					

TABLE 6 Cont.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT USAGE

Commercial Reading Firms

	Groups				Individual			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Tachistoscope	15		4		22		2	
Controlled pacing machine	12		2		23		2	
Scanning paperbacks	10		5		13		4	
Films	9		3		5		1	
Textbooks	15		5		24		6	
Other materials and equipment (Group and Individual)	39		7					

TABLE 6 Cont.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT USAGE

Colleges and Universities

	Groups				Individual			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Tachistoscope	86		10		87		7	
Controlled pacing machine	64		8		122		12	
Scanning paperbacks	31		7		55		4	
Films	64		3		32		1	
Textbooks	82		7		97		9	
Other materials and equipment (Group and Individual)	100		10					

TABLE 7
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF INSTRUCTORS

	Corporations				Commercial Reading Firms			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
College educated	5	22.7			7	65	4	23.5
College graduates	5	22.7	4	100	28	26.2	7	42.1
Holders of master's degrees in subjects other than reading	6	27.3			23	21.5	3	17.6
Holders of master's degrees in reading	3	13.5			21	19.6	1	5.9
Holders of Ph. D. degrees in subjects other than reading	0				2	1.9		
Holders of Ph. D. degrees in reading	0				2	1.9		
Participants in a special training program	3	13.5			23	21.5	2	11.7
Holders of a specialist's certificate in reading	0				1	.93		
Holder of a six-year specialist diploma	0				0			

Colleges and Universities (Table 7 continued)

U. S.		Can.	
No.	%	No.	%
23	9.2	1	5.3
57	22.8	6	31.6
64	25.6	9	47.3
87	34.9	2	11.1
8	3.2		
9	3.6		
0		1	5.3
0			
1	.4		

TABLE 8

NUMBER WHO GIVE VISION CHECKS

	YES				NO				Recommend Private Checks	In Special Cases or on Reques
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Corporations	1	5.5	0		17	94.4	6	100	0	0
Commercial Reading Firms	15	42.9	2	25	20	57.1	6	75	5	1
Colleges and Universities	78	51.3	4	21.2	74	48.7	15	79.1	9	9

TABLE 9
KINDS OF VISION CHECKS USED

	Keystone Telebinocular				Bausch and Lomb Orthorater				EDL Reading Eye			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Corporations	0				0				0			
Commercial Reading Firms	6				2				0			
Colleges and Universities	48*		1		6		2	100	4	100		

*In addition to these 48, nine respondents to the question, "Is Vision Checked?" mentioned they used the Keystone Telebinocular upon teacher, parent, or student request or when there is an obvious need.

Note: Totals of test used do not total the same figures used in Table 8 because some respondents replied affirmatively to the question but declined to name the test used.

(Table 9 continued)

Combination of Tests				Others			
U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1				0			
0				6		2	50
7				9		2	50

TABLE 10

NUMBER WHO GIVE A READING PRE-TEST

	YES				NO				SOMETIMES			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Corporations	14	73.8	6	100	5	26.3	0		0			
Commercial Reading Firms	42	97.7	9	90	1	2.3	1	10	0			
Colleges and Universities	154	95.7	18	94.8	6	3.7	1	5.3	1	.6		

TABLE II

COURSE CONTENT OF LAST CLASS MEETING

	Corporation				Commercial Reading Firms				Colleges and Universities			
	U. S		Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Post testing	4	21. 2	5	45. 5	13	20. 6	8	28. 6	17	10. 9	11	31. 5
Discussion of post-testing results	2	11. 5	3	27. 2	11	17. 4	8	28. 6	10	6. 1	6	17. 4
Suggestions for continuations on own	1	5. 3	3	27. 2	16	25. 4	9	32. 5	21	12. 8	13	37. 2
All of above	8	42. 1			16	25. 4			41	25. 0		
Post testing and discussion of results	0				0				13	7. 9		
Discussion of Post-testing results and suggestions for continuation on own	0				0				34	20. 7		
Post testing ans suggestions for continuation on own	0				0				17	10. 9		
Other	4	21. 2			7	11. 2	3	10. 7	11	6. 7	5	14. 3

TABLE 12

RETENTION OF GAINS IN READING RATES

	Yes				Sometimes				Usually			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Corporations	10	55.5	4	80	2	11.1			0			
Commercial Reading Firms	35	81.5	10	100	2	4.7			1	2.3		
Colleges and Universities	91	66.4	12	85	3	2.2			5	3.6		

TABLE 12 Cont.

RETENTION OF GAINS IN READING RATES

	Do Not Know				Not at Peak				No				Generally Not			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Ca	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	
Corporations	5	27.8			0				1	5.6	1	20	0			
Commercial Reading Firms	3	6.9			0				2	4.7	0		0			
Colleges and Universities	31	22.6			12	8.8			6	4.4	2	14.3	1	.7		

TABLE 13

METHODS OF MEASURING RATE

	Corporations				Commercial Reading Firms				Colleges and Universities			
	U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of words per minute	17	100	6	85.6	34	83	8	53.4	140	87	16	89
Number of words dealt with per minute	0		1	14.3	3	73	2	13.3	16	9.8	1	5.5
Number of syllables	0				0				0			
Other	0				4	9.8	5	33.3	5	3.1	1	5.5

TABLE 14

COMPREHENSION GOALS

Per Cent of Comprehension	Corporations		Commercial Reading Firms		Colleges and Universities	
	U. S.	Can.	U. S.	Can.	U. S.	Can.
50 to 59	1		0		0	
60 to 69	0		4		9	2
70 to 79	7	1	11	7	63	8
80 to 89	2	2	14	1	42	6
90 to 100	2	1	4	1	16	3
60 to 79	0		0		0	
70 to 89	0		0		5	
80 to 100	0		1		6	
65 to 85	1		0		0	
75 to 100	1		0		1	
70 to 100	1		4		5	
Strive for individual improvement	3		1		1	
Comprehension goals vary with material, purpose, and individual reader	0		1		2	

TABLE 15

STUDY SKILL RELATIONSHIP

	YES				NO			
	U. S.	%	Can.	%	U. S.	%	Can.	%
Corporations	12	70.6	5	83.4	5	29.4	1	16.7
Commercial Reading Firms	42	97.7	9	100	1	2.3		
Colleges and Universities	153	97.5	16	84.2	4	2.5	3	15.8